

What is Claimed is:

1. A method for an auction comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine, the request for the item being based on a performance specification of the item;

5 sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine; and

receiving, through the network, a bid from the second machine, the bid being based on the request for the item.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the first machine includes a first computer

10 operated by a potential consumer, and the second machine includes a second computer operated by a potential vendor.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the request for the item from the first

15 computer is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

4. The method of claim 1, further comprising preparing a report of the auction

based on at least one of (i) the request for the item and (ii) the bid.

20 5. The method of claim 1, further comprising

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a second bid from the third machine, the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining a result of an auction based on (i) the request for the item, (ii) the first

25 mentioned bid and (iii) the second bid.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the determination of the result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first mentioned bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid and (ii) at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

8. The method of claim 6, wherein the request for the item, the first mentioned bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of a potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising ranking the first mentioned bid and the second bid based on a comparison between (i) the request for the item and (ii) the first mentioned bid and the second bid.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising sending at least one of (i) a first status and (ii) a second status to at least one of (i) the second computer and (ii) the third computer,

wherein the ranking includes the first status for the first mentioned bid and the second status for the second bid, the status indicating one of (i) a leading bid and (ii) a lagging bid.

11. The method of claim 10, further comprising receiving a third bid from at least one of (i) the second computer and (ii) the third computer, the third bid being based on at least one of (i) the first status and (ii) the second status.

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12. The method of claim 5, further comprising sending the result of the auction to at least one of (i) the first machine, (ii) the second machine and (iii) the third machine.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein an operator of the first machine submits to mediation based on the result of the auction.

14. The method of claim 12, wherein an operator of the first machine submits a second request for a second item based on the result of the auction.

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15. The method of claim 14, wherein the second item and the first mentioned item are the same.

16. The method of claim 1, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

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17. The method of claim 1, further comprising sending, through the network, an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

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18. A method for an auction comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from the second machine and a second bid from the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining (i) a first result of an auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of an auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of an auction based on the first result and the second result.

19. The method of claim 18, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein the request for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

21. The method of claim 19, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising ranking the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison between (i) the request for the item and (ii) the first bid and the second bid.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising
sending at least one of (i) a first status and (ii) a second status to at least one of (i) the second computer and (ii) the third computer,
wherein the ranking includes the first status for the first bid and the second status for the second bid, the status indicating one of (i) a leading bid and (ii) a lagging bid.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising receiving a third bid from at least one of (i) the second computer and (ii) the third computer, the third bid being based on at least one of (i) the first status and (ii) the second status.

26. The method of claim 18, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

27. The method of claim 18, further comprising sending, through the network, an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

28. The method of claim 18, further comprising sending the third result of the auction to at least one of (i) the first machine, (ii) the second machine and (iii) the third machine.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein an operator of the first machine submits to mediation based on the result of the auction.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein an operator of the first machine submits a second request for a second item based on the third result of the auction.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the second item and the first mentioned item are the same.

32. A method for an auction comprising:
receiving, through a network, a first request for a first item from a first machine, and a second request for a second item from a second machine; and
sending, through the network, a third request for a third item to a third machine, the third request for the third item being based on (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a first potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a second potential consumer, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a potential vendor.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising notifying the first potential consumer and the second potential consumer of an option to combine the first request and the second request.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein the first request for the first item and the second request for the second item request the same item.

36. The method of claim 32, wherein the third request for the third item and at least one of (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item request the same item.

37. The method of claim 32, wherein the third request for the third item includes one of (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item.

38. The method of claim 32, wherein the third request for the third item is sent to the third machine based on (i) the third request for the third item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

39. A method for an auction comprising:
receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;
sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from the second machine and a second bid from the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining a third bid, the third bid being based on (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

41. The method of claim 40, further comprising notifying the first potential vendor and the second potential vendor of an option to combine the first bid and the second bid.

42. The method of claim 39, further comprising receiving, through the network, the third bid from at least one of (i) the second machine and (ii) the third machine.

43. The method of claim 39, wherein the first bid and the second bid are for the same item.

44. The method of claim 39, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

45. A method for generating a request for an item comprising:

selecting at least one of (i) an item to purchase and (ii) a performance specification of the item to purchase;

selecting a term of a request for the item to purchase;

determining the request for the item to purchase based on at least one of (i) the item itself, (ii) the performance specification of the item and (iii) the term of the request for the item; and

sending, through a network, the request for the item to an auctioneer machine server.

46. The method of claim 45, wherein the item includes at least one of (i) a product and (ii) a service.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) the performance specification of the item to purchase and (iii) the term of the request for the item to purchase is selected from a database having the at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) the performance specification of the item to purchase and (iii) the term of the request for the item to purchase.

48. The method of claim 46, wherein the selection of the at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) the performance specification of the item to purchase and (iii) the term of the request for the item to purchase is based on at least one of (i) a past auction and (ii) an active auction.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the determination of the request for the item to purchase is based on at least one of (i) a past request for an item and (ii) an active request for an item.

50. The method of claim 45, wherein the term includes at least one of (i) type of vendor, (ii) closing date of auction, (iii) closing time of auction, (iv) evaluation criteria of a bid and (v) award criteria of a bid.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the type of vendor includes at least one of (i) socio-economic classification of vendor and (ii) geographic location of vendor.

52. The method of claim 50, wherein the evaluation criteria of the bid includes a match between the request for the item and a bid from a potential vendor, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and the bid from the potential vendor and (ii) the bid from the potential vendor satisfying the request for the item.

53. The method of claim 50, wherein the award criteria of the bid includes one of (i) best value and (ii) low price.

54. The method of claim 53, wherein the best value is based on at least one of (i) performance risk of a potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

55. A method for an auction comprising:
receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a machine, the request for the item being based on a performance specification of the item; and
sending, through the network, a bid to the machine, the bid being based on the request for the item.

56. The method of claim 55, wherein the machine includes one of (i) a computer server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated by a potential consumer.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein the request for the item from the machine is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

58. The method of claim 56, wherein the bid matches or satisfies the request for the item.

59. A method for an auction comprising:
receiving, through a network, (i) a request for an item from a first machine and (ii) a first bid from a second machine, the first bid being based on the request for the item;
determining a second bid, the second bid being based on (i) the request for the item
and (ii) the first bid; and
sending, through the network, the second bid to the first machine.

60. The method of claim 59, wherein the first machine includes one of (i) a computer server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated by a potential consumer, and the second machine includes a computer operated by a potential vendor.

61. The method of claim 60, further comprising receiving, through the network, a notification of an option to combine the first bid and the second bid.

62. An apparatus for an auction comprising:

a receiver to receive (i) a request for an item from a first machine and (ii) a bid from the second machine;

a transmitter to send the request for the item to a second machine; and

a memory device coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the memory device

being configured to store (i) the request for the item and (ii) the bid,

wherein (i) the request for the item is based on a performance specification of the item and (ii) the bid is based on the request for the item.

63. The apparatus of claim 62, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, and the second machine includes a second computer operated by a potential vendor.

64. The apparatus of claim 63, wherein the request for the item from the first computer is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

65. The apparatus of claim 62, further comprising a processor coupled to the receiver, the transmitter, and the memory device, the processor being configured to determine a result of an auction based on (i) the request for the item, (ii) the first mentioned bid and (iii) a second bid,

wherein the transmitter is configured to send the request for the item to a third machine, and the receiver is configured to receive the second bid from the third machine, the second bid being based on the request for the item.

66. The apparatus of claim 65, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

67. The apparatus of claim 66, wherein the determination of the result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first mentioned bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid and (ii) at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

68. The apparatus of claim 62, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

69. The apparatus of claim 62, wherein the transmitter is configured to send an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

70. An apparatus for an auction comprising:
a receiver to receive (i) a request for an item from a first machine, (ii) a first bid from a second machine and (iii) a second bid from a third machine;
a transmitter to send the request for the item to the second machine and to the third machine; and

a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured to determine (i) a first result of an auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of an auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of an auction based on the first result and the second result,

wherein the first bid and the second bid are based on the request for the item.

71. The apparatus of claim 70, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

72. The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the request for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

73. The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

74. The apparatus of claim 71, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

75. The apparatus of claim 74, wherein the processor is configured to rank the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison between (i) the request for the item and (ii) the first bid and the second bid.

5 76. The apparatus of claim 70, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

77. An apparatus for an auction comprising:
10 a receiver to receive (i) a first request for a first item from a first machine and (ii) a second request for a second item from a second machine;
a transmitter to send a third request for a third item to a third machine; and
a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured to determine the third request for the third item,
15 wherein the third request for the third item is based on (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item.

78. The apparatus of claim 77, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a first potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer
20 operated by a second potential consumer, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a potential vendor.

79. The apparatus of claim 78, wherein the transmitter is configured to notify the first potential consumer and the second potential consumer of an option to combine the first
25 request and the second request.

80. An apparatus for an auction comprising:

a receiver to receive (i) a request for an item from a first machine, (ii) a first bid from a second machine and (iii) a second bid from a third machine;

a transmitter to send the request for the item to the second machine and to the third machine; and

a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured to determine a third bid,

wherein (i) the first bid and the second bid are based on the request for the item and

(ii) the third bid is based on the first bid and the second bid.

81. The apparatus of claim 80, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

82. The apparatus of claim 81, wherein the transmitter is configured to notify the first potential vendor and the second potential vendor of an option to combine the first bid and the second bid.

83. An apparatus for generating a request for an item comprising:

a transmitter to send a request for an item to an auctioneer machine server;

a processor coupled to the transmitter, the processor being configured to determine the request for the item,

wherein the request for the item is based on at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) a performance specification of the item to purchase, and (iii) a term of the request for the item to purchase.

5 84. The apparatus of claim 83, wherein the item includes at least one of (i) a product and (ii) a service.

10 85. The apparatus of claim 84, wherein a selection of the at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) the performance specification of the item to purchase and (iii) the term of the request for the item to purchase is based on at least one of (i) a past auction and (ii) an active auction.

15 86. The apparatus of claim 83, wherein the term includes at least one of (i) type of vendor, (ii) closing date of auction, (iii) closing time of auction, (iv) evaluation criteria of a bid and (v) award criteria of a bid.

 87. The apparatus of claim 86, wherein the award criteria of the bid includes one of (i) best value and (ii) low price.

20 88. An apparatus for an auction comprising:
 a receiver to receive a request for an item from a machine;
 a transmitter to send a bid to the machine; and
 a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured to determine the bid,

wherein the request for the item is based on a performance specification of the item,
and the bid is based on the request for the item.

89. The apparatus of claim 88, wherein the machine includes one of (i) a computer
server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated by a potential consumer.

90. The apparatus of claim 89, wherein the request for the item from the machine
is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

91. The apparatus of claim 89, wherein the bid matches or satisfies the request for
the item.

92. An apparatus for an auction comprising:
a receiver to receive (i) a request for an item from a first machine and (ii) a first bid
from a second machine;
a transmitter to send a second bid to the first machine; and
a processor coupled to the receiver and the transmitter, the processor being configured
to determine the second bid,

wherein the first bid is based on the request for the item, and the second bid is based
on (i) the request for the item and (ii) the first bid.

93. The apparatus of claim 92, wherein the first machine includes one of (i) a
computer server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated by a potential
consumer, and the second machine includes a computer operated by a potential vendor.

94. The apparatus of claim 93, wherein the receiver is configured to receive a notification of an option to combine the first bid and the second bid.

95. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine, the request for the item being based on a performance specification of the item;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine; and

receiving, through the network, a bid from the second machine, the bid being based on the request for the item.

96. The machine-readable medium of claim 95, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, and the second machine includes a second computer operated by a potential vendor.

97. The machine-readable medium of claim 96, wherein the request for the item from the first computer is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

98. The machine-readable medium of claim 95, the method further comprising sending, through the network, the request for the item to a third machine; receiving, through the network, a second bid from the third machine, the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining a result of an auction based on (i) the request for the item, (ii) the first mentioned bid and (iii) the second bid.

99. The machine-readable medium of claim 98, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

100. The machine-readable medium of claim 99, wherein the determination of the result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first mentioned bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid and (ii) at least one of the first mentioned bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

101. The machine-readable medium of claim 95, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

102. The machine-readable medium of claim 95, the method further comprising sending, through the network, an invitation to the first machine to submit the request for the item, the first machine submitting the request for the item based on the invitation.

103. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from the second machine and a second bid from the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining (i) a first result of an auction based on the request for the item and the first bid, (ii) a second result of an auction based on the request for the item and the second bid, and (iii) a third result of an auction based on the first result and the second result.

104. The machine-readable medium of claim 103, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

105. The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the request for the item from the potential consumer is based on at least one of (i) a performance specification of the item and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

106. The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the determination of the third result of the auction is based on a match between the request for the item and at least one of (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid, the match including at least one of (i) an exact match between the request for the item and at least one of the first bid and the second bid, and (ii) at least one of the first bid and the second bid satisfying the request for the item.

107. The machine-readable medium of claim 104, wherein the request for the item, the first bid, and the second bid include at least one of (i) performance risk of potential vendor, (ii) price, (iii) warranty and (iv) performance specification of an item.

108. The machine-readable medium of claim 107, the method further comprising ranking the first bid and the second bid based on a comparison between (i) the request for the item and (ii) the first bid and the second bid.

109. The machine-readable medium of claim 103, wherein the request for the item is sent to the second machine and the third machine based on (i) the request for the item and (ii) data on at least one potential vendor.

110. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a first request for a first item from a first machine, and a second request for a second item from a second machine; and

sending, through the network, a third request for a third item to a third machine, the third request for the third item being based on (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item.

111. The machine-readable medium of claim 110, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a first potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a second potential consumer, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a potential vendor.

112. The machine-readable medium of claim 111, the method further comprising notifying the first potential consumer and the second potential consumer of an option to combine the first request and the second request.

113. The machine-readable medium of claim 110, wherein the third request for the third item includes one of (i) the first request for the first item and (ii) the second request for the second item.

114. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a first machine;

sending, through the network, the request for the item to a second machine and to a third machine;

receiving, through the network, a first bid from the second machine and a second bid from the third machine, the first bid and the second bid being based on the request for the item; and

determining a third bid, the third bid being based on (i) the first bid and (ii) the second bid.

115. The machine-readable medium of claim 114, wherein the first machine includes a first computer operated by a potential consumer, the second machine includes a second computer operated by a first potential vendor, and the third machine includes a third computer operated by a second potential vendor.

116. The machine-readable medium of claim 115, the method further comprising notifying the first potential vendor and the second potential vendor of an option to combine the first bid and the second bid.

117. The machine-readable medium of claim 114, the method further comprising receiving, through the network, the third bid from at least one of (i) the second machine and (ii) the third machine.

118. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

- selecting at least one of (i) an item to purchase and (ii) a performance specification of the item to purchase;
- selecting a term of a request for the item to purchase;
- determining the request for the item to purchase based on at least one of (i) the item itself, (ii) the performance specification of the item and (iii) the term of the request for the item; and
- sending, through a network, the request for the item to an auctioneer machine server.

119. The machine-readable medium of claim 118, wherein the item includes at least one of (i) a product and (ii) a service.

120. The machine-readable medium of claim 119, wherein the selection of the at least one of (i) the item to purchase, (ii) the performance specification of the item to purchase and (iii) the term of the request for the item to purchase is based on at least one of (i) a past auction and (ii) an active auction.

121. The machine-readable medium of claim 118, wherein the term includes at least one of (i) type of vendor, (ii) closing date of auction, (iii) closing time of auction, (iv) evaluation criteria of a bid and (v) award criteria of a bid.

122. The machine-readable medium of claim 121, wherein the award criteria of the bid includes one of (i) best value and (ii) low price.

123. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, a request for an item from a machine, the request for the item being based on a performance specification of the item; and

sending, through the network, a bid to the machine, the bid being based on the request for the item.

124. The machine-readable medium of claim 123, wherein the machine includes one of (i) a computer server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated by a potential consumer.

125. The machine-readable medium of claim 124, wherein the request for the item from the machine is based on at least one of (i) the item itself and (ii) a term of the request for the item.

126. The machine-readable medium of claim 124, wherein the bid matches or satisfies the request for the item.

127. A machine-readable medium having encoded information, which when read and executed by a machine causes a method comprising:

receiving, through a network, (i) a request for an item from a first machine and (ii) a
5 first bid from a second machine, the first bid being based on the request for the item;
determining a second bid, the second bid being based on (i) the request for the item
and (ii) the first bid; and
sending, through the network, the second bid to the first machine.

10 128. The machine-readable medium of claim 127, wherein the first machine
includes one of (i) a computer server operated by an auctioneer and (ii) a computer operated
by a potential consumer, and the second machine includes a computer operated by a potential
vendor.

15 129. The machine-readable medium of claim 128, the method further comprising
receiving, through the network, a notification of an option to combine the first bid and the
second bid.